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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

March 1, 2020

The journey of Lent is an invitation

by Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister

Grace to you and peace! The Lenten Journey has begun. It has been described as a holy journey: a journey toward God. That image has had me pondering. If we have a tradition of “giving up” certain things for Lent which is suppose to help us feel discomfort, does it help us move closer to God? If we have a tradition of “adding something” like a spiritual practice, an extra weekly worship experience, or particular acts of kindness, do they help us move closer to God?



The journey of Lent is an invitation. In a world that is filled with fear and hatred, a world where time seems to be of short supply, Lent is an invitation to take a deep breath, turn away and turn toward those things that draw us closer to God and Jesus the Christ.

The season began with Ash Wednesday, the liturgy of which is focused on remembering our mortality and acknowledging our imperfection. The journey of Lent now continues to remind us to consider this earthly life as the opportunity to see the blessings that God has given us, even though life is often filled with challenges and difficulties. The Gospel lectionary scriptures for Lent encourage us in the midst of our lives to reflect on the question “who is this Jesus, the Christ” and how does our faith change our lives.

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference has placed much emphasis this past year on making connections. It has been about lifting up

and celebrating the faithful ministries that happen through local churches and through those involved in outreach and specialized ministries. The season of Lent reminds us to ask the question – why are we involved in those ministries? Is the root of our commitment and passion different from others involved in similar ministries? When we ask and clarify “the why,” we are strengthened in the passion and commitment to keep moving forward to change the world because of God’s love.

Our local churches, individual members and ministers of the Southeast Conference have voices that need to be heard in our world today, in our communities and beyond. May this Lent be the season to ground ourselves in that which is the core of our being; and listen anew for God’s voice encouraging us and strengthening us for the continued journey, even beyond Lent.

Blessings! - Char

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator

What happens when we are generous?

2 Corinthians 9: 6-8 teaches us: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **GOD** loves a cheerful giver. And **GOD** is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in good work."



THANK YOU ALL for your 2019 gifts and contributions. It was one of our best years to date. We are grateful for all the ways you continue to support this conference and the work of the same. We look forward to another record year in 2020.

A note of thanks to all who applied for a Cycle one/spring Transforming Lives Transforming Churches grant. Thank you for respecting the deadlines and adhering to the guidelines. We are concerned about all of our churches and want to support in any way that we can.

Please continue to reach out to me with your suggestions, questions and invitations to your church as we continue to make this conference that beacon of light and hope.

Together, we make a difference.

Continued blessings, as we continue to journey...TOGETHER.



Data Hub facilitates UCC Census

It's not too late to send in your stats! It's time once again for each SECUCC church to update church and staff information and upload it to the Data Hub. This helps our denomination prepare the Yearbook and Directory information for the 2020 national setting. The conference office has mailed to each church instructions and dates.

Southeast Conference Annual Meeting

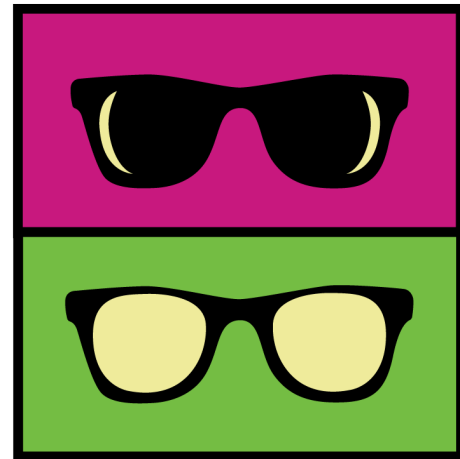
Mark your calendar and join us for our Southeast Conference Annual Meeting. June 19-20, Montgomery, Alabama.

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is seeking ideas for innovative programs/outreach missions that might be shared during one of the workshop options. If you feel your church has an innovative program that might be of interest to other churches,

please contact Ugena Whitlock at ruwhitlock@gmail.com or Julie Binney at jabinney@gmail.com.

Look for registration to begin soon. Don't forget that there will be an extensive the youth program for all ages!

**REFLECTING
ON OUR PAST**



**FOCUSING
ON OUR FUTURE**

Annual Meeting Logo Winner Announced

We are pleased to announce that Jessica Hilderbrand-Marshall is the winner of the 2020 Annual Meeting logo contest. Jessica, our returning winner from 2019, is a 2002 graduate of Penn State University and a 20 year veteran of the graphic design and promotional product industry. Currently, she is the President of [CustomComet, LLC](#) . and in charge of the entire consumer facing side of the company with special attention to the art and marketing teams. Jessica recently combined her company, [Salvaged Soul Designs](#), with CustomComet in order to provide even more services to all of her clients as well as the promotional product customers that CustomComet serves.

Jessica also serves as the visual designer for Phoenix Christian Church, UCC in Wildersville, TN. Not only does she design and create the weekly services and special events, but also works diligently on the weekly prayer list/newsletter, website & social media pages. She designs t-shirts and fundraisers that the church puts on annually. This year they are kicking off fundraising efforts with a 108-page cookbook, Valentine's Fellowship Dinner, Spring Bike Blessing, Church Camp Outs, fellowship luncheons and some cool new products to sell too! Air Fresheners, Lapel Pins, Banners, T-shirts, Traditional Printed Items & so much more! Jessica has a wealth of knowledge and design skills that can find a solution at any budget. If you're looking for a fundraising idea, or someone to design your next church t-shirts, turn to CustomComet or Salvaged Soul Designs and reach out to Jess... she's always happy to help!

Calling all Specialized Ministers!!

Specialized Ministers are invited to be in conversation via Zoom on Tuesday, March 31: 9:30 am Eastern Time. This is a continuation of the conversation begun in February. All Specialized Ministers are welcome!! [Register Online!](#)

Grant Funds Available for Immigration Ministries

The Southeast Conference has been provided with a \$500 grant from the National setting of the UCC to support the ministry of the Conference or Conference churches that are addressing issues of immigration. Because there is not a Conference-wide effort in this area, local churches are invited to apply for some of these funds. Community ministries do not qualify. If interested in applying for some of these funds, simply send an email to cburch@secucc.org, identifying the church and how the funds would be used. The amount of money granted will depend on the number of requests. Deadline to apply is March 31, 2020.



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of March 1

- United Church of Cookeville; Cookeville, Tennessee

- PATHWAYS Theological Education Program
- Roy Bain
- Douglas Farmer
- Vant Hardaway
- David Speno

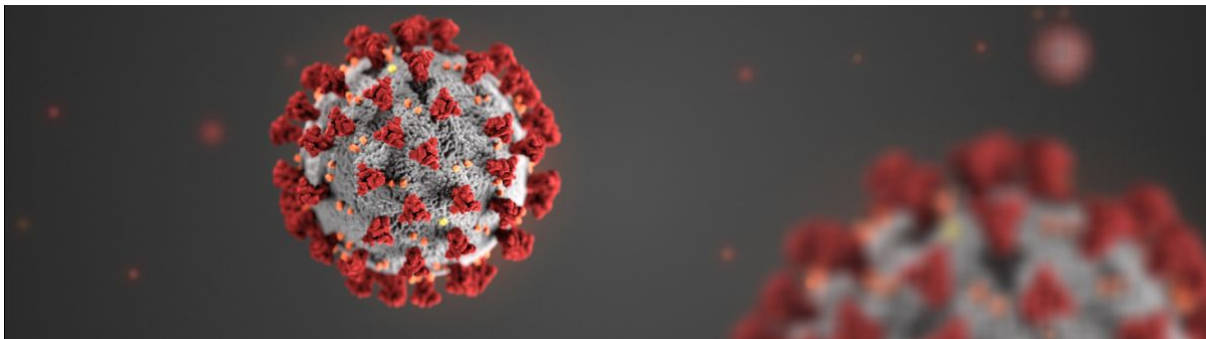
Week of March 8

- Rehoboth Fellowship; Atlanta, Georgia
- UCC National Staff and Collegium
- Valerie Coe Lowder
- Kriss (Mi Young) Choi
- Timothy Garvin-Leighton
- James Janecek

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA;
Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

News from the Wider Church



Coronavirus Information from the UCC

As new cases of the coronavirus are reported in other countries and across the United States, United Church of Christ leaders are urging education, caution and common sense — sharing a few basic guidelines to enable congregations and other UCC organizations to find useful, relevant information to plan their course of action.

UCC Disaster Ministries has developed a [web section](#) for congregations that includes a word from Blackmon, a [bulletin insert](#) and an excellent resource from the Southern New England Conference UCC, with a checklist and

advice for community engagement, worship (e.g. communion, offering, passing the peace), communications, leadership backup, pastoral care and even fiscal concerns. [Learn more on the UCC website.](#)



National Youth Event Registration Now Open

Are your church youth getting excited for NYE 2020? Registration is now open! Register youth attendees [at this link](#).

UCC releases major 'Sacred Air and Toxic Pollution' study

Because all Americans have the right to breathe clean air, the United Church of Christ has just released a new report that identifies the 100 industrial facilities spewing the most toxic air pollution in heavily populated areas across the United States. "Breath to the People: Sacred Air and Toxic Pollution" pinpoints the locations of the U.S. "Toxic 100 super polluters" in 28 states and documents the hazardous chemicals being released into the air. **10 of the 100 sites listed are in the states covered by the Southeast Conference.**

Leaders of the church, known for its environmental justice work, unveiled

the study at an Ash Wednesday news conference Feb. 26 in Washington D.C. The report is now available at a specially created [Breath to the People](#) website, which includes an interactive map.



One Great Hour of Sharing® Sunday is March 22

One Great Hour of Sharing® is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the UCC. The suggested offering date for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering is March 22, 2020. Visit the UCC website for resources: <https://www.ucc.org/oghs>.

Center for Progressive Renewal is now Convergence

Convergence, formerly The Center for Progressive Renewal, “supports the reshaping of organizations, congregations and leaders engaged in an age of movement from “organized religion” to “organizing religion” driven by the values of an inclusive, progressive theological vision for a more just world

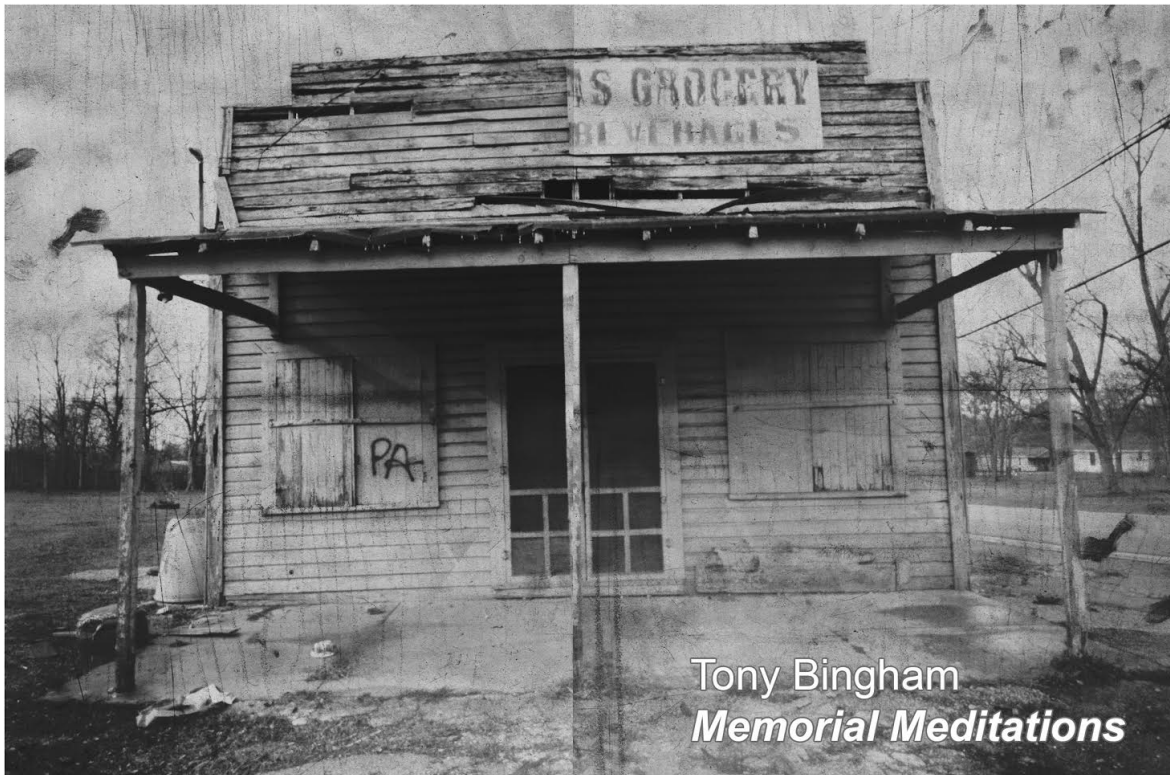
for all.” Check their website for their many offerings and courses, including an amazing “Courageous Faith Summit” with 40 presenters over a 10-day period. There is also a free webinar series designed to equip the future of the church. Visit Convergence online at <https://convergenceus.org>.



Back Bay Mission Announces Retirement of Executive Director Dr. Alice Graham

BILOXI, MS - It is never easy to say goodbye but with a great sense of gratitude, the Board of Directors of Back Mission announces the retirement of Dr. Alice Graham as Executive Director. Her last official day will be December 31, 2020. Since joining the Mission in 2015, Dr. Graham has led a gallant effort in meeting the needs of the under-served and enhancing the value of the organization in the community. Her passion for serving others is exemplary. We are excited to continue the mission of Strengthening Neighborhoods, Seeking Justice, and Transforming Lives with Dr. Graham through the remainder of 2020. The Board has begun the process of identifying candidates to advance the Mission in the future. Please join the Board, along with Staff, as we congratulate Dr. Graham on her upcoming retirement.

News from our Local Congregations



Tony Bingham: Memorial Meditations

by Dorinda P. Broadnax

As we continue to celebrate the month of February as African American Heritage (Black History) Month at First Congregational UCC in Birmingham, I wanted to share with the Conference and the Wider Church the accomplishments and recognition given one of First Congregational UCC members, Mr. Tony Bingham. Mr. Bingham is an African American artist based in Birmingham, Alabama. His art is featured in the exhibition *Memorial Meditations*, a solo exhibition of sculptures and photo-based work. The exhibit runs from Friday, February 28 to May 22, 2020 at the Coleman Center for the Arts in York, Alabama. [More details on the Coleman Center website.](#)

Installation of Rev. Dorinda Broadnax

An invitation: The Rev. Dorinda Broadnax will be installed as the pastor of First Congregational Church, UCC, Birmingham, AL on March 15 at 3 pm. Rev. Raymonda Speller, Pastor of Community Congregational UCC in Montgomery, AL will deliver the Installation Message. Everyone is welcome!

Training and Learning Opportunities



Boundary Training for 2020

by Carrole Moss

As most are aware, **Healthy Boundary training is now MANDATORY in the United Church of Christ.** These workshops are intended to equip ordained, commissioned, and licensed clergy, as well as other church leaders and staff, to understand healthy boundaries in ministry relationships. These workshops are a joint endeavor of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia and the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Healthy Boundaries 101 is a prerequisite for Healthy Boundaries 201.

Our 2020 Healthy Boundary training offerings are:

Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals

Saturday, March 21, 2020, 9:00am-4:00pm

Disciples Of Christ Regional Office

2370 Vineville Avenue, Macon, GA 31204

Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals

Thursday, June 18, 2020, 12 noon - 7:00pm

Community Congregational UCC

Southeast Conference UCC Annual Meeting

3481 South Court Street, Montgomery, AL 36105

Healthy Boundaries 201: Beyond Basics

Saturday, August 22, 2020, 9am-4:00pm

Disciples Of Christ Regional Office

2370 Vineville Avenue, Macon, GA 31204

Healthy Boundaries 201: Beyond Basics

Tuesday, November 10, 2020, 9:00am-4:00pm

First Christian Church of Atlanta

4532 LaVista Road, Tucker, GA 30084

Please visit our website: **secucc.org** for registration details. We look forward to seeing you in one of the aforementioned sessions, after all, **THIS TRAINING IS MANDATORY!!**

Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Job Opportunities

Back Bay Mission Seeking Executive Director

by Mary Ruth, Board Member of Back Bay Mission since 2016 and member of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Pleasant Hill TN.

The Board of Directors at Back Bay Mission is searching for an Executive Director to assume duties in Biloxi MS in 2021 or before. Inquiries and resumes should go to Fred Howell, BBM Search Committee Advisor, at fmhowell9@gmail.com or 228-235-5369. Dr Alice Graham has served superbly as Executive Director for several years and retires Dec 31. The board is planning a special event Nov 21 to honor her service. For more information about Back Bay Mission and review the ED job description, visit www.thebackbaymission.org.

Conference Calendar

Southeast Conference Clergy Retreat

March 8-10, 2020

DuBose Retreat Center, Monteagle, TN

UCC Ministers Middle Tennessee Gathering

March 12 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm CDT

Howard Congregational Church, Nashville

Commission on Ministry Meeting

March 19 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT

Specialized Ministers Online Conversation

March 31 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

Board of Directors Meeting

April 2 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

Annual Meeting Planning Session

April 13 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

Commission on Ministry Meeting

April 16 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT

SEC Annual Meeting

June 19-20, 2020

Montgomery, AL

National Youth Event

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; dharris@secucc.org

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